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ABSTRACT

The 1994 NAEP (National Assessment of Educational Progress) reading assessment was administered to approximately 27,400 public and non-public school students at grades 4, 8, and 12. Across the 3 grades assessed, there were a total of 96 multiple-choice, 144 short constructed-response, and 33 extended constructed-response questions. Information for home support for reading was collected from students at all three grades. The number of different types of literacy materials in the home, the amount of home reading, and the opportunity to discuss reading are all related to reading proficiency. Significantly fewer 12th graders in 1994 than in 1992 reported having all 4 types of literacy material (magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, and at least 25 books) in their homes. The other two grades surveyed did not report a change from 1992 to 1994. Since 4th, 8th, and 12th graders were sampled using the same techniques, data do not suggest an overall trend in the amount of literacy materials in the home. In 1994 12th-grade students also reported reading less for fun and having fewer literacy discussions with family and friends. This decline was not reported for 4th and 8th graders. (Contains 4 tables of data and 12 notes.) (NKA)

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NAEPFACTS

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Reading Proficiency and Home Support for Literacy

The number of different types of literacy materials in the home, the amount of home reading and the opportunity to discuss reading are all related to reading proficiency. As compared to the 1992 NAEP survey, 12th-grade students in 1994 reported reading fewer pages at home, having fewer types of literacy materials at home, and fewer opportunities to discuss their studies or reading experiences with other people. Fourth- and 8th- graders did not report a change in these variables since 1992. These activities, the data show, are associated with higher reading scores at all grade levels.

Purpose and Background

To help children and adolescents develop reading skills is a responsibility shared by the family and the school. Often, however, it is the school's role, or its failure that is paramount in our national discussions about education. National reports, like *A Nation at Risk* and *Becoming a Nation of Readers,* play up the shortcomings of American schools, but the successes and failures of American students have multiple origins.

Students' exposure to various reading materials at home and family support for students' school and literacy efforts can play a critical role in students' growth as readers (Morrow, 1995). Given the importance of the home for literacy development, this *NAEPfacts* examines the relationship between home factors and 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-grade students' performance on the 1994 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) in reading, as well as the changes in home support since 1992. (For a fuller discussion, see Campbell, et al, 1996.)

The 1994 NAEP reading assessment was administered to approximately 27,400 public and non-public school students at fourth, eighth, and twelfth grades. Across the three grades assessed, there were a total of 96 multiple-choice, 144 short constructed-response, and 33 extended constructed-response questions. Results are reported on a 500-point scale. Results are also reported according to reading achievement levels—Basic, Proficient, and Advanced. Information concerning home support for reading was collected from students at all three grades.

Students' Home Support for Literacy

NAEP background data provide information about patterns of students' reading proficiency and home support for literacy—available literacy materials, reading for fun, literacy discussions with family and friends, and television viewing habits. Two patterns deserve attention. One is the relationship between home support and student proficiency level. The other pattern is the change in home support from the 1992 assessment to the 1994 assessment. When reviewed in light of current research, these findings contribute to understanding and interpreting reading proficiency results.

Literacy materials in the home. Numerous studies have demonstrated the benefits of increasing students' exposure to literacy materials in their homes, especially for lower-achieving students (e.g., Goldenbery et al. 1992; Koskinen et al. 1995). A relationship between students' access to home literacy materials and their reading achievement is consistent with findings from the NAEP 1994 reading assessment. Students were asked about the presence of four types of literacy materials in their home—magazines, newspapers, encyclopedias, and at least 25 books. As shown in table 1, on average, students who reported having more types of literacy materials in their homes also had higher average reading proficiencies. Significantly fewer 12th-graders in 1994 than in 1992 reported having all four types of literacy material in their

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NCES 96–814

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Table 1.— Students' reports on number of different types of literacy materials in their homes, by grade: 1992, 1994

Number of Types of Literacy Materials	Grade 4 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 8 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 12 Percentage and Scale Score	
	1992	1994	1992	1994	1992	1994
	37	38	51	50	60	55 <
Four	226	227	268	270	298	295 <
	323	4	29	29	26	28
Three	219	216	259	258	290	286 <
	31	29	20	21	14	17
Two or Fewer	204	197 <	241	239	274	269 <

<The value for the 1994 assessment was significiantly lower (>higher) than the value for 1992 at or about the 95 percent confidence level.

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments.

homes. Fourth- and eighth- graders do not report a change from 1992 to 1994 in the number of different kinds of reading materials in their homes. Since 4th-, 8th-, and 12th-graders were sampled using the same techniques, the data do not suggest an overall trend in the amount of literacy materials in the home.

Reading for fun. The connection between leisure reading activities and reading achievement has been established by numerous studies (e.g., Watkins and Ewards, 1992). Part of the reason for this connection may be that students who frequently read for fun not only gain practice in the process of reading, but also are likely to be exposed to a broad scope of topics and situations in their reading that can provide a base from which future reading experiences are enriched and made more meaningful. A clear connection between frequent reading for fun and higher average reading scores is suggested by the NAEP 1994 (and 1992) results. At all three grades, students who more frequently read for fun on their own time had higher average proficiencies. While it may be that students who read for fun gain more practice and background knowledge, it may also be that students with better reading achievement are more likely to read for fun in the first place. Twelfth-grade students reported reading for fun less in 1994 than in 1992, as shown in table 2. This change is not reported for 4th- and 8th- grade students, who read for fun in 1994 as often as they reported reading for fun in 1992.

Literacy discussions with family and friends. When students discuss their schoolwork at home, they establish an important link between home and school. Several recent

Table 2.— Students' reports on the frequency with which they read for fun on their own time: 1992, 1994

Frequency of Reading	Grade 4 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 8 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 12 Percentage and Scale Score	
	1992	1994	1992	1994	1992	1994
	44	45	22	21	23	24
Almost everyday	223	223	277	277	304	302
	32	32	28	26	28	24
Once or twice a week	218	213 <	263	264	296	294
	12	12	25	25	26	24
Once or twice a month	210	208	258	257	290	285 <
	13	12	25	27	24	27 >
Never or hardly ever	199	197	286	246	279	273 <

<The value for the 1994 assessment was significantly lower (>higher) than the value for 1992 at or about the 95 percent confidence level.

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments.

Table 3.— Students' reports on the frequency with which they discuss their studies at home and talk about their reading with family and friends: 1992, 1994

Discuss Studies at Home	Grade 4 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 8 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 12 Percentage and Scale Score	
	1992	1994	1992	1994	1992	1994
	54	55	37	38	30	30
Almost everyday	221	219	269	269	298	296
	22	22	30	29	34	33
Once or twice a week	220	215	263	264	295	292
	6	6	11	12	16	14 <
Once or twice a month	215	208	257	257	292	287 <
	17	17	21	21	20	23 >
Never or hardly ever	202	199	247	250	280	274 <
Talk About Their Reading with Family and Friends						
	26	28	13	12	17	16
Almost everyday	215	213	263	262	298	296
	36	36	28	28	37	34 <
Once or twice a week	224	223	269	269	299	296
	15	15	26	26	27	28
Once or twice a month	219	214	263	264	291	288
	23	21	32	34	19	22 >
Never or hardly ever	209	207	249	249	278	270 <

<The value for the 1994 assessment was significantly lower (>higher) than the value for 1992 at or about the 95 percent confidence level.

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments

studies have documented the increased achievement of students whose parents have become more involved in their schooling (Heller and Fantuzzo, 1993; Christenson, 1992). As with the 1992 NAEP reading results, more frequent discussions about studies were associated with higher average proficiency. Similarly, more frequently talking about reading was associated with higher reading proficiency (table 3). There was a significant decline in the percentage of 12th-grade students who reported discussing studies at home once or twice a month. Significantly more 12th-graders in 1994 than in 1992 reported never having these discussions. Such a decline was not reported for 4th- and 8th-graders.

Television viewing habits. Many studies, including NAEP reports, have indicated a negative relationship between television viewing and reading achievement (Mullis, et al. 1993; Beentjes and Van der Voort, 1988). One major concern has been that time spent watching television may be displacing time that students could spend on literacy-related activities. In 1994, students who reported watching at least four hours of television daily displayed lower average reading scores than their peers who watched less television each day (table 4). The data do not show any changes in television watching from 1992 to 1994.

Table 4.— Students' reports on amount of time spent watching television each day: 1992, 1994

Television Watching	Grade 4 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 8 Percentage and Scale Score		Grade 12 Percentage and Scale Score	
	1992	1994	1992	1994	1992	1994
	20	21	14	14	6	7
Six hours or more	199	194	241	239	271	264 <
	22	22	27	27	20	18
Four to five hours	216	216	258	257	284	280 <
	40	38	46	45	47	46
Two to three hours	224	222	265	265	293	289 <
	19	19	13	14	27	29
One hour or less	221	220	270	270	301	297 <

<The value for the 1994 assessment was significantly lower (>higher) than the value for 1992 at or about the 95 percent confidence level.

SOURCE: National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP), 1992 and 1994 Reading Assessments

Summary and Conclusions

The current NAEP results show declines in home factors including literacy materials in the home, reading for fun, and literacy discussion with family and friends at grade 12 between 1992 and 1994. Fourth- and 8th-graders did not report a change in these variables since 1992. These activities, the data indicate, are associated with higher reading scores at all three grade levels.

Some researchers have argued that home factors influence reading achievement. While NAEP data are consistent with such an interpretation, NAEP does not provide direct evidence of causality between home factors and reading scores. Other factors, such as the students' initial ability prior to entering the instructional program, the instructional program itself, and the school environment could have brought about changes in home support for literacy. In addition, the two data points from 1992 and 1994 for 12th-graders may not be adequate to demonstrate a pattern of declining home factors.

The recent NAEP reading assessment and its accompanying information on home involvement raise important concerns about the sources of literacy problems among our students. Becoming literate is a responsibility shared by the school, the home, and the student. In 1985, the national report *Becoming a Nation of Readers* called upon parents to "monitor their children's progress in school, become involved in school programs, support homework, buy their children books or take them to libraries, encourage reading as a free time activity, and place reasonable limits on such activities as "TV viewing" (Anderson et al, 1985, 117).

The school and the home do not exist as independent influences on students' reading development. Each supports and reinforces the other. The classroom teacher has a considerable influence on students' outside reading habits (Anderson, Wilson, and Fielding, 1988) through modeling, sharing of books and authors, and providing time for sustained silent reading. When a classroom teacher sets high expectations for outside reading or when school administrators seek parental involvement, parents can support the school by expressing genuine interest in their children's reading and studying, and by helping students set aside time to read. Conversely, when parents stress literacy in socially significant ways (Auerbach, 1995), they give to their children and their children's teachers a base upon which higher learning is built.

Notes

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All differences reported are statistically significant at the .05 level with adjustments for multiple comparisons. For further information on Standard errors or on estimating variance, see Campbell et al.

The *NAEPfacts* series briefly summarizes findings from the National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP). The series is a product of the National Center for Education Statistics (NCES). Gary W. Phillips serves as the Associate Commissioner for Education Assessment. This issue was written by ***Sheida White*** from NCES and ***Peter Dewitz*** from the University of Virginia. Readers are invited to comment by contacting the first author at NCES, Assessment Group, 555 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington, DC 20208. To order NAEP publications, call Bob Clemons at 202–219–1690.

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